

# The Philatelic Communicator

## Journal of the American Philatelic Society Writers Unit #30



-R.P.B.-

-30-

[www.wu30.org](http://www.wu30.org)

First Quarter 2020 Issue 207

## The Use of Humor

John M. Hotchner

We don't see much of Rodney Dangerfield in philatelic writing. To the extent that articles about stamps are dry recitations of facts, maybe that's the way it should be. But philatelic writers do well to keep in mind that humor is almost always an attractive feature that helps to pull readers into your work.

Humor need not be obvious. Speeches often start with a joke, and an article may also – if the joke relates directly to a major point you want to make. But subtlety counts, and there are myriad ways to do that. Let's look at a few; keeping in mind that analyzing humor often leaves the "funny" aspect by the side of the road.

References you use – Who did not smile, or grimace, when you saw Rodney Dangerfield named in the first sentence above? Like his humor or not, he was a funny guy who could both take it and dish it out.

His barbed wit cut many a famous ego down to size, but one of his secrets, from which we can learn, is that he was often self-deprecating. His humor had a blunt-force-trauma feel to it, but we can be much less confrontational.

You can use the hammer approach: "I grew up too poor to own a perforation gauge, so it was not until my 30s that I paid attention to that aspect of stamp classification."

Or you can sneak up on your target – even when it is yourself: "It wasn't until my thirties when I had been a collector for over 15 years that I started paying attention to different perforation sizes. Why was that? There was no perf gauge in the starter kit my parents gave me, and it never occurred to me to pay any attention to what Indonesian collectors call 'bergigi', which translates to 'teeth'."

The words you choose to use can also be funny. Consider this sentence: "Collectors of U.S. stamps were gobsmacked when the USPS issued in 2013 their \$2 Jenny take-off on the 24c invert error of 1918." The word "gobsmacked" is both hard to ignore and a bit jarring. As a reader, you're not expecting it, and before you know it, you're smiling.

More subtle is the use of "take-off" with regard to a stamp with an airplane on it. Some would skip right over it. Others would get the joke.

Using quotations is another method to bring a smile. In an article I did on youth in philately, this from lawyer/

politician Frank A. Clark (1860-1936) seemed both accurate and provocative, if not funny in a classic sense: "Every adult needs a child to teach. It's the way adults learn." Not a roll-'em-in-the-aisles line for sure; but amusing in its way.

Even writing about a given stamp might give you an opportunity (given access to Google) to come up with something that will make an article more attractive. Take stamps showing what one of my grandsons christened "The Pencil" on the Mall in Washington, DC.

Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York had this to say on the floor of the Senate – in 1876: "Mr. President, the mammoth chimney called the Washington Monument is a meaningless and unsightly thing; its foundations are insecure; and we have buried a hundred thousand dollars in the ground. Assuming that we succeed in founding or establishing the foot of the monument so that it will not give way, it will still remain as I have described it."

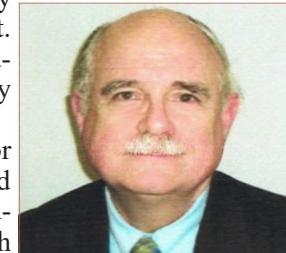
Conkling was not a laugh-a-minute kind of guy, but in light of today's Pencil, his reading of the progress being made on its construction is funny.

But I hear you say, as an old editor of mine did years ago: "Stamp collectors are a serious bunch. Most don't have a functioning sense of humor when it comes to their hobby."

Had I heeded his advice when I pitched the idea of running a monthly cartoon caption contest in my weekly *Linn's* column, one of the most important draws of that column would never have seen the light of day. Instead I bet on the stamp collectors I knew who did have a normal sense of humor, and I'm still betting on it 34 years later.

There are many ways to appeal to the public sense of humor, but in some ways the road has become more rocky. I was recently required to remove the word "midget" from a column in one of the eight publications for which I write; lest it offend someone vertically challenged, or a devotee of political correctness who has appointed him- or herself as the protector of their feelings.

But navigating around those shoals is worth the effort. Your readers will appreciate the humor you can include in your work; be it in an article, an essay, a club newsletter, or even a monograph or book. ◆





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## David Crotty From the Editor



When a publication is about to print something uncomplimentary there is really no hard and fast requirement that it warn the recipient. However, in a case like this we are all members of the same group, we are all friends, and most important, this is a hobby. This is supposed to be fun.

Then it comes down to: should I publish this? In the case where a member is so upset about what he sees that he writes a long letter, I think that the answer is yes, we publish even if we don't agree entirely. Of course, I did expect a response, and that would certainly be printed too. But it would have been best (considering we are all friends and all) to have allowed the recipients to respond, if possible, in the same journal issue. We unfortunately did not provide the opportunity to respond in the publication of Ken Lawrence's letter to the editor. We regret making that mistake and offered a special edition for response from the current and previous editors. Unfortunately we could not get everyone onboard for that special edition. So here we have one response on page 4.

We very much want to thank Mark Kellner for providing his side of the story.

The *American Philatelist* is the favorite for all of us and the editing and publishing of such an important part of our hobby is a focus. When I saw that some editors had short tenure at the job even I took notice. I think it was important to bring this story out in the open. I am certain that we will come through this better than when we started.

### Proofreaders

Our Associate Editor Thomas Johnston was the best proofreader I have ever worked with. As you might recall he wrote a nasty letter complaining about my sloppy spelling. I appointed him to keep me honest and he did a great job for us.

### Humor

Our world lacks a lot these days, not the least of which is humor. John Hotchner hits the nail on the head with his most recent and timely advice. Front page for that one.

Dave



## Lloyd de Vries President's Message

In the last issue of *The Philatelic Communicator*, we blew it.

In the Winter 2019 issue, we published a letter from Ken Lawrence critical of how *American Philatelist* is being handled by the American Philatelic Society, and naming several people for particular criticism. *TPC* editor Dave Crotty and I exchanged quite a few emails over how to handle the letter, but we misunderstood each other on whether those named had been offered a chance to respond and had chosen to accept or pass on that opportunity.

It turned out we had not offered responses, and for that, I apologize, to them and to you. We invited them to respond, even offering a special edition of *TPC*. There was much back-and-forth via email, and eventually the special edition was scrapped. Eventu-

ally, only Mark Kellner took us up on the offer, and his article is on page 4.

I also didn't read Ken's letter before publication. I should have; I've been on the receiving end of his barbs. In hindsight, had I done so, I might have asked for some softening of the personal criticisms. *TPC* is not a British tabloid!

However, I do feel the subject was appropriate for *TPC*: The philatelic oversight and input for *AP*. If writing, editing and publishing cannot be debated here, in the official newsletter of the APS Writers Unit, then where? We just could have handled it better.

These weren't the first journalistic mistakes of my career, and I'm fearfully certain they won't be the last. Hopefully, I've learned from the mistakes, as I hope we all do when such things happen.

—30—

## The Pagesmith Postal Postal Cover and Paper Repair

Member Bill Shultz brought this website to our attention: <https://thepagesmithpostal.wixsite.com/info> and suggested we give the site a short review.

This site offers restoration services for postal paper. Bill says he has needed this type of service in the past. I also once found a cover that was on a last flight out as WWII started up. That cover was torn down the front. I found a service that repaired that torn area.

The owner of this service, Jasmine Smith <[thepagesmithpostal@gmail.com](mailto:thepagesmithpostal@gmail.com)> responded to our inquiry.

"I provide essential restoration services for postal materials. I specialize in surface cleaning (using dry, chemical-free methods), crease smoothing (with PTFE implements), and reinforcement / tear repairs (with acid-free, archival materials). The results are as subtle as possible, in order to best preserve document integrity and value."

Figure 1 shows an example of Jasmine Smith's work from her website. ♦



Figure 1. Cleaning and Edge Repair.

# No, *The American Philatelist* Is NOT “In Crisis”

## *A response to Ken Lawrence*

Mark A. Kellner

It's a bracing thing to be labeled as “grossly negligent” and having “failed” at one’s job, yet such were the words Ken Lawrence used—without any supporting evidence—to describe my brief tenure as Chief Content Officer for the American Philatelic Society and Editor of *The American Philatelist*.

It's disappointing, to say the least, to have *The Philatelic Communicator* publish such harsh words about a member of Writer’s Unit #30 without first giving the subject a chance to reply at the same time.

And it's frustrating to have one’s work dismissed in a pearl-clutching philippic from someone who has not served in an APS elected office for fifteen years and has never mustered the courage to try his hand at editing our Society’s journal.

I am a Life Member of the APS, having joined in 1972 under the sponsorship of the late George Martin. In 2018, *before* I was invited to join the headquarters staff, I prepaid my dues through 2022 in order to qualify for the Life Membership under the terms in effect when I joined back then. I believe in the APS, and I am grateful for nearly 50 years of continuous association.

I am no “Johnny-come-lately” to either philately or magazine publishing. In my professional life, I’ve had more than 45 years of publishing experience, including a stint as editor-in-chief of a consumer computer publication (*PC Portables* magazine) and seven years as news editor of two denominational magazines for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, producing nearly 1,700 pages of news content during that run. (Those who want a more complete picture of my work can find my profile on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mkellner/>.)

In short, I’ve been up and down the editorial road a few times. I’m grateful for the opportunities I’ve had, and in philately, I’ve very much appreciated the associations and connections I’ve made. People such as George Martin, Jim DeVoss, Jesse Boehret, Frank and

Marjorie Sente, Lois Evans, Dick Sine, Dane Claussen, and countless others have enriched my life and my collecting experience.

My wife, Jean, and I have been married for 36 years, and as might be imagined, we strive to do what’s best for both of us, particularly when it comes to major life decisions. The choice to accept the Chief Content Officer position in Bellefonte, PA, was one of those decisions. I had looked forward to “giving back” to the hobby I love through serving *The American Philatelist*’s readers, and, to be honest, had hoped to conclude my professional career in that position. Jean anticipated a return to the East Coast, and to living closer to several of her relatives, including a brother in the Bellefonte area.

While I enjoyed working at the APS headquarters, it soon became apparent that moving to Bellefonte would for us be, at best, risky, and, at worst, potentially calamitous. Selling a home in Salt Lake City, where we lived, wasn’t the problem. Buying a home in Centre County, Pennsylvania, wouldn’t be impossible, but there were challenges connected with such a purchase. (At the time, my then-89-year-old father resided with us, and his needs figured into the home-buying process.)

I was also less impressed with the tax situation in Centre County, Pennsylvania. Property taxes seemed rather high, as did gasoline taxes and energy prices overall. Ken Lawrence may believe the “intellectual and cultural attractions” of the area are enough to draw someone to full-time employment there. For those of us still in working life, the costs of living there—and the prospects for full-time employment for my wife—were a bit daunting.

In the midst of these challenges, our lives suddenly changed with the death of my father, Jacques Kellner, on March 20, 2019. (Dad was the person who got me started in stamp collecting, I should note.) This, along with other developments, provided different options for my wife and myself, and I elected to leave the Chief Content Officer position.

Crisis continued on page 5

## Crisis continued from page 4

I categorically reject Ken Lawrence's characterization that I "failed" in this job. Yes, I would have liked to have stayed longer in the editor's chair, but a variety of factors led me to my decision. Mr. Lawrence should understand that accepting employment with the American Philatelic Society is merely that: accepting employment. It is not enlistment in the U.S. military, it is not a lifetime appointment to the federal bench, nor is it the undertaking of holy orders. In short, either side of an employer/employee relationship is generally free to end it at any time and for any reason.

As to Mr. Lawrence's expressed opinion that I was "grossly negligent," he offers zero evidence to support his claim. Whatever real or imagined slights he may have perceived as coming from me, I do know others appreciated the work I did, however briefly. To toss a phrase such as "grossly negligent" around is unfair; some with a legal background might suggest it is even more harmful.

Ken Lawrence's attack on the direction of *The American Philatelist* offers little in the way of solutions other than to supplant the current editor and bring in someone who is a master of the perf gauge. But it ignores the realities of publishing today—the need to have competency in, if not mastery of, Adobe's inDesign software, for example—and the challenges of maintaining a magazine whose subscriber base is ageing and subject to decline. Having, as they do now, an editor who is already resident in the State College area is an advantage. And let's not forget that what may be the world's greatest philatelic information resource—the APRL—is literally steps away from that editor's desk.

While I would in no way presume to speak for either Jay Bigalke or Martin Kent Miller, it's worth noting that each of us—for what I would imagine are personal reasons unique to our circumstances—ultimately decided not to relocate to the State College area. That Mr. Lawrence believes such relocation to be a matter of little consequence suggests a great misunderstanding of the question. (Indeed, the *Centre Daily Times*, where former AP editor Bill Welch once worked, announced on January 8 it would end printing operations in State College and outsource the work to a printer in Harrisburg. Why?

"CDT Publisher and President Janet Santostefano said the business decision was reached after much discussion and after considering factors including aging equipment **and continued challenges in filling open skilled production positions locally.**" [emphasis added] Source:

<https://www.centredaily.com/news/local/article239047623.html>.

I am happy to endorse Thomas Loebig's efforts to produce a good magazine, since I have a solid understanding of what the job entails. Reading the January 2020 issue, for example, I found a very nice assortment of articles, from which an astute reader could easily learn a good deal. Everything was laid out in a professional manner, and the magazine "flowed" quite nicely, in my opinion. Coming into this field after a youthful brush with stamp collecting, Mr. Loebig has gotten off to a very good start.

Recruiting outside editorial reviewers and advisors is a good thing. Quite honestly, I wish I'd thought of that myself. Past editors may have had deeper strength in philatelic knowledge and connections, but no one—not even Bill Welch—knew everything. Getting help from a group of experienced collectors is a positive development, in my view.

And headquarters personnel matters should, frankly, be left to those tasked with such responsibilities. There's an executive director in Bellefonte who reports to a Board of Directors. That board is responsible for managing the Society's operations, and they can direct the executive director as they see fit. If Ken Lawrence doesn't like this, he is certainly welcome to run for a board seat in 2021.

I respect Ken Lawrence's philatelic research and scholarship. His attack on *The American Philatelist*, and those who have stepped up to help produce it, does little credit to his overall body of work. That *The Philatelic Communicator* would publish such a letter without allowing those of us named therein to comment at the same time is equally disheartening.

We can do better—as a hobby, as organizations within the hobby, and as individuals. In this instance, it is my belief Mr. Lawrence and *The Philatelic Communicator* are the ones who "failed."

# Former WU 30 Secretary-Treasurer

## George Griffenhagen 1924-2019

George Griffenhagen died November 21, 2019, at age 95. He was named Treasurer of the Writers Unit 30 in 1981 and the following year took over the secretary's job as well and became Secretary-Treasurer. He served in that office for 31 years until stepping down in 2013. During his term, he maintained membership records, collected dues, and insured candidates were in place for the election of officers among other responsibilities. He was elected to the Writers Hall of Fame in 1998.

George was best known for his many years of service with the American Topical Association. He served as publicity director, study unit director, board member, vice president, and president, the last office from 1976 to 1979. He edited the association's journal *Topical Time* for seventeen years. He was a member of the ATA's board of directors for an unprecedented 42 years. He was also the former editor of the Medical Subjects study unit's journal *Scalpel and Tongs*. He was named ATA Distinguished Topical Philatelist in 1970. George was instrumental in ATA's becoming an APS affiliate. He authored several handbooks for ATA including *Adventures in Topical Stamp Collecting, Drugs and Pharmacy on Stamps, Pharmaceutical Philately*, and *Private Die Proprietary Medicine Stamps*. For his work in the field of medicine tax stamps, he was named Distinguished Fiscalist in 1979 by the American Revenue Association.

George was treasurer also for the Council of Philatelic Organizations (COPO) from 1983 to 1991. In 2003 he was honored with the APS John N. Luff award for exceptional service to philately.

George Bernard Griffenhagen was born on June 9, 1924, in Portland, Oregon, the son of Clara and Richard Griffenhagen. During World War II he served two and a half years in the 20th Combat Engineers where he was involved in campaigns in North Africa, the invasion of Sicily, the Normandy invasion, the battles of the Hurtgen Forest and the Bulge, and the liberation of Pilsen, Czechoslovakia.

He then obtained degrees in pharmacy and specialized in the history of that field. He was a curator of medical sciences for the Smithsonian Institution and then was named associate executive director for com-

munications of the American Pharmaceutical Association. He edited their journal for 17 years and authored many articles and several books. George also planned and managed their annual conferences for many years (just as he had for the National Topical Stamp Shows). Later he served as the APhA's director of international relations before retiring in 1989.

He was highly regarded in the international pharmaceutical scene as U.S. representative of pharmacy to the World Health Organization, officer in the International Federation of Pharmacy, vice president of the Pan American Federation of Pharmacy, secretary of the organizing committee of the Joint Japanese-United States Conference on Pharmaceutical Science as well as the International Congress of the History of Pharmacy held in Washington DC. George received major awards for service to American pharmacy and was an honorary president of the American Pharmaceutical Association as well an honorary member of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society in the UK.

After retiring from APhA he became executive secretary of the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy, of which he was a member for 70 years. He was a former president of AIHP. With the passing of George Griffenhagen, the Institute's current president, W. Clarke Ridgway, offered the following tribute:

Pharmacy historians across the US and around the world today grieve the loss of one of the giants of the field. Throughout his long and distinguished career, George Griffenhagen energetically promoted any and all facets of the history of his beloved profession. His encyclopedic knowledge of the tools of the apothecary has enlightened generations of students, pharmacists, curators, collectors, researchers, and writers. His passion for disseminating and understanding the organizational, educational and legal development of the profession of pharmacy has inspired innumerable practitioners and historians for over seven decades. The membership and staff of the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy mourn one of its greatest advocates and cherish the memories of his enthusiasm, knowledge, and patriotism.

Alan Warren



# Thomas Patrick Johnston 1958-2019

Thomas Patrick Johnston, 61, of Frederick, Maryland entered heaven on December 27, 2019 by way of Frederick Memorial Hospital in Frederick, MD. He had valiantly fought a ten-month battle against a rare and aggressive form of bladder cancer; ultimately, even the most respected specialists in their field could not hold this vicious foe at bay.

It is not possible to adequately summarize a man's life - especially not a man whose absence leaves such a gaping chasm - in just a few lines of text.

The son of Patricia (Kolkoski) Johnston and Albert Sidney Johnston III, Thomas was born in Phoenix, AZ in May of 1958. The majority of his formative years were spent in the Ocean Springs/Biloxi area of Mississippi. He graduated from Notre Dame High School in Biloxi. He served honorably in the United States Navy as a Nuclear Engineer aboard the USS Truxtun CGN-35, a nuclear powered guided missile cruiser, serving for an extended period of time in the Persian Gulf during the Iranian Hostage Crisis. Following USN service, Thomas went on to earn his BS in Health Physics, Radiation Protection from Thomas Edison State College; he pursued his MPH in Epidemiology at New York Medical College, where he also served as Radiation Safety Officer, and held faculty appointments in the Medical School and the School of Public Health, teaching graduate level courses. At his death, he was a Health Physicist, Training Manager at the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Gaithersburg, MD.

Thomas was quick to help where help was needed. He served in a wide array of elected and volunteer positions in his field. Among other professional organizations, he was active in the Health Physics Society, serving on the History Committee, the Society Support Committee, and the First Responder Assistance Team; at the time of his death he served on the organization's Board of Directors. He served in the Medical Reserve Corps as a Health

Physicist. A lover of science and a believer in the value of education, he served as a science fair judge in Montgomery and Frederick Counties in Maryland.

He was an avid writer and editor, contributing to and editing for a host of professional, scientific, and also philatelic publications. A man with an insatiable desire for learning, he was forever researching biographical information and publishing historical articles about everything from women in science to his own discovery of a time capsule in Australia. He never stopped surprising even those who knew and loved him best.

As much as he loved science, learning, and history, Thomas loved his family, sailing, and fishing even more. It was his family connection to the true story of The Perfect Storm that led him to meet his adoring

wife, Dawn (Bailey) Johnston in Vero Beach, FL. After marrying, they moved to MD where they were blessed with three beautiful daughters: Eliza Grace (16), Audrey Rose (15), and Abigail Joy (12). His wife and daughters love - and mourn - him fiercely.

Thomas Johnston is predeceased by his parents; brothers Paul Johnston, and Timothy Johnston; as well as his first wife, Sylvia (Bracciante) Johnston, with whom he had no children.

In addition to his wife and children, and mother-in-law Dawn (Elliott) Bailey of Frederick, MD, Thomas leaves behind his beloved sisters Ruth Johnston (MS), Julie Johnston (FL), and Maggie (Rich) Whitcomb (FL and GA). His surviving brother is Captain Albert Sidney Johnston IV (FL). His surviving extended family includes many beautiful nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

**Editor's Note: One day I received a rather nasty letter to the editor about how sloppy some parts of our TPC were. What do you do with a reader like that? You make him the proofreader. He served us well.** ♦



Thomas Johnston with daughters Eliza Grace (16), Audrey Rose (15), and Abigail Joy (12)

# Stamp Club Newsletters that Sizzle, Part-II

## Paul Petersen - Philatelic Society Lancaster County

Part-I (Vol. 53, 4th Quarter, 2019, Issue # 206, Page 7) emphasized the importance of the stamp club newsletter as a timely and viable means of communication (along with the club website). It contains notification of upcoming events (local and regional), and it documents most club activities and its members, often with digital images. Sometimes there is room for a little philatelic stuff. When stored and available on the club's website, the newsletter becomes the repository of that particular club's history.

Consider a newsletter exchange with other stamp clubs. Work this out in advance with the clubs, and reap the benefits. Just add the other club's secretary or editor to your distribution list, and you're done. In turn, they will send your club's newsletter to their membership, and you'll do the same with their newsletter. This is free publicity! We have even received a few articles and images from members in the other clubs. When other nearby clubs learn of your activities such as dates of your educational programs, your annual show, or other events, they might attend. This newsletter exchange and website have facilitated new membership and increased attendance at our annual stamp show. Further, we have gleaned many good programmatic and operational ideas from other clubs' newsletters.

An effective editor should solicit quality contributions from the membership. Contributors will develop greater ownership in both the publication and the club proper. This will further encourage others toward greater club and newsletter engagement. The key is to find your way into your members' inner writership.

Realize, too, that you may need to assist some of your new writers, from scanning to rewriting. I even accept hand-written manuscripts, but these are becoming less common. Encourage images. If needed, prepare a short Writer's Guide for prospective authors, one that encourages rather than discourages.

What are club members able to do for your newsletter? Rather than a laundry list, I've compiled several categories with examples. These are not mutually exclusive. And a word of caution is in order. Should you find yourself having to coerce or twist an arm or two to get a member to write a column, don't do it. This person may not be reliable in the end, leaving you disappointed especially when there are deadlines to meet. When someone is interested in writing for your newsletter, it will be obvious; this is the writer to get. (These are many of the same issues encountered when recruiting/soliciting club members for society offices, as this too can be disappointing.)

**Direct Solicitation:** Consider your members' skills. Mary, for example, collects Washington-Franklins; is she willing to write a short article regarding a piece of this specialty (i.e. Differentiating a rotary from a flat plate printed stamp)? This goes for most club members who are actively collecting. Most have something to share. What do they collect, and are they willing to write about it? It will be more efficient when you can suggest a specific area or two to write about, as it will seem less daunting. For example, returning to your member who collects Washington-Franklins, "Mary, can you write a short article about the Orangeburg coils or the problems with the early perf-12 issues?"

Do you have a club member who is an attorney? Would he/she write about some issues germane to collectibles such as estates, taxes, or perhaps even a series of short articles? Remember that this is a stamp club newsletter; it is neither Law Review nor The American Philatelist. Collaborate with a member to develop a club survey (whatever topic is needed). Ana-

lyze, organize, and publish the results. Survey findings can be interesting to those who participate, and this will have positive ramifications for your club's operations.

With your outside speakers, ask them well ahead of their presentation date if they would send you a brief bio and description of their presentation and a scan or two of a related item for the newsletter. Or discuss this over the phone, and write it yourself. Many speakers have philatelic resumes available. Programmatic descriptions will create an interest in the meeting's presentation and may attract visitors to your club.

**Reporters:** These are potential writers with an interest in an ongoing writing assignment. This can range from reporting on the club's annual stamp show to an introduction of the new members each month. Other assignments include local stamp shows, club trips, APS Summer Session and/or Volunteer Week, ATA's Nat'l Topical Stamp Show (This is now combined with APS and AFDCS forming The Great American Stamp Show). There are the other club biographies (i.e. new club officer bios), club auction information, Kid's Corner, obituaries, stamp technology, recent donations to the club, new issues, important auction sales, and many others. What occurs periodically in your club, and who has the skill and the responsibility to write about it? As reporters, these writers will follow club activities more closely and display greater engagement. The club secretary who submits monthly minutes to the newsletter is a good example. Want to know what is going on in the stamp club, ask the secretary!

How about a column for beginners? Do you have a member willing to write a monthly or quarterly short column? Consider topics such as soaking (the soakables and non-soakables), perf gauges, watermarking, using the catalog, etc. You'll have Philately 101 in your newsletter. The topics are endless.

**Compilation-Personal:** These are solicited from all club members. When the deadline is reached, consider all the contributions and weave them together into an organized article, comparing and contrasting wherever possible. What is your favorite stamp (or cover) and why? What is your best find at a stamp show or auction? How did you get started in philately?

**Compilation-Topical:** Seek contributions on issues that will arouse a multitude of opinions from your members. When in hand, you integrate the responses into an essay. Some suggestions: Where will the USPS be in five (ten) years? What do you think of the Harry Potter (or Elvis), the thermal eclipse stamp, or the Forever stamps? Should living people be portrayed on U.S. stamps? Where should our recruiting resources go? To adults? To youth? Should the decennial U.S. Int'l Stamp Shows be open to other collectibles such as coins, PPCs, ephemera, militaria, and more? Should stamps be used in art projects such as being cut up for mosaics? Should owners of world-class collections make them available to other collectors via auction, or should they donate them to museums? There are no shortages of issues that will cause opinions to flow in your newsletter. Just pick up any philatelic magazine, and the issues will jump out at you.

What is your philatelic Bucket List? (Author's note: The Bucket List is a gallows humor term used for the listing of achievements you would like to accomplish before you "Kick the bucket.") For the stamp club newsletter there are two kinds of lists. The first includes stamps (covers) you would like to own by the end of your lifetime and why (Perhaps include what

Sizzle continued on page 9

# How A Typo Affected Philatelic History

## Lloyd A. de Vries

Ken Lawrence is fond of reminding me — at least once a year, whether I need it or not — of my ill-fated first day cover column in *Stamp Collector* (Van Dahl) on the correct spelling of FDC names. It was the early 1990s, and I was railing against people who spelled House of Farnam like the circus king Barnum, and mentioned pioneer cachelmaker Harry Ioor.

In those days, I would fax my column to the editorial office in Albany, Oregon, where an assistant editor would “re-key” or type it into the typesetting equipment. While entering the text of the “Farnum” column, she decided I couldn’t possibly have meant “Ioor,” she told me later, and entered “Toor.” So there I was, ranting about misspelling and my column became what Ken calls a “Toor de Farce.”

After learning what happened, I vowed that all future mistakes in my articles would be made by *me*, and I bought myself a state-of-the art (360 baud!) modem, which allowed me to transfer the text directly into Van Dahl Publishing’s typesetting system from my Apple IIe.

(Thirty years ago, this was state of the art stuff, kids, but no, I came in after wood-burning personal computers.)

However, I was having problems getting the system to work consistently. I discovered a newsletter for Apple II users, called *open-Apple* and after a while and probably too many panic-stricken telephone calls, I was referred to *open-Apple* ‘s “RoundTable” on the GENie online discussion service. GENie (“General Electric News & Information Exchange”) was an offshoot of GE’s internal communication system that linked offices. At night, that service was largely unused, so GE made money off it with GENie.

After hanging around the Apple II RoundTable (“RT”) awhile, and learning more about uploading my articles (including the fact that the problems weren’t always at my end), I discovered GENie’s Hobby RT, which had a very quiet Stamp Collecting area. I volunteered to manage that philatelic area. After a year or so, I began to chafe over the

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**Sizzle** continued from page 8

you would do to obtain it?). The second listing includes items on your bucket list as seen on stamps such as driving a race car, visiting Machu Picchu, making a moon landing, doing some ballroom dancing, cruising along Route 66, and meeting Queen Elizabeth or former president Barak H. Obama, among others. There are stamps that portray almost any object or activity on one’s bucket list. This could also make a great non-competitive exhibit for the annual show or a highlight on “Show and Tell” night.

Abstractions: These are short summaries of articles that would be of interest to the club. The sources can include philatelic journal articles, the internet, and the popular press when there are articles that may reflect the hobby, the USPS, and more. Always cite sources. As an example, two well-received abstracts in our newsletters were based on Internet blogs, which addressed how to detect the ‘regumming’ and ‘reperforating’ of stamps.

RoundTable’s absentee ownership and pitched GENie for an independent Stamp Collecting RT. I got it, in 1993.

This wasn’t the first online discussion area for philately. I know Ed Jackson of Georgia was already running stamp collecting “newsgroups” — pre-World Wide Web (WWW) text-only forums — and there may have been others.

I won several awards at GENie for publicizing my forum, and one of my stunts was creating “The Virtual Stamp Club” (VSC) and getting it accepted as a chapter of the American Philatelic Society — the first online chapter of any stamp collecting organization.

VSC and I expanded to other online services, and at one point I had six “branches” of The Virtual Stamp Club. The last one created was Delphi’s Stamps, Coins & Postal Forum, which opened on December 6, 1996. (You can do a search for message 1.1 in what is now The Stamp Collecting Forum on DelphiForums and see the beginning.)

In pitching new forums, I was told several times “there’s no interest in stamp collecting on the Internet.” On the other hand, when Delphi told me to start a web page, I told Orville and I told Wilbur that thing would never fly. They told me to do it or I’d lose my contract.

Did I mention I was getting paid for most if not all of these venues? However, the operators either died off as the visual World Wide Web replaced text-only dial-up and “newsgroups,” or discovered that they didn’t need expert moderators to run the areas. Delphi and America Online were the only ones who made the transition, and I was only a subcontractor on AOL.

At any rate, that’s how a typographical error by an assistant editor who didn’t know anything about philately helped create interest in stamp collecting on the internet.

—30—

Note to editor:

“GENie” with the first two letters capitalized is correct, despite Microsoft Word’s best efforts.

“RoundTable” with a capital T is also correct. ◆

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Regular feature by different writers: Many in your club belong to a variety of stamp societies. Survey who is in what and publish a monthly column by the members who, for example, are in APS, ATA, GPS, Classic Society, BNAPA, and many more.

Book Reviews: Stamp collectors are readers. Ask them to write a review of a philatelic book that he/she is reading, one that may be of general interest to the club. And don’t forget fiction. There are many mysteries involving postage stamps, and most are entertaining.

Letters to the Editor and Other Opinion Columns: These are timeless and self-explanatory. They should be encouraged from among your membership on a continual basis.

In conclusion, learn the philatelic interests of your members. Make a creative pitch to them, and be willing to help with the publishing process. It may take a while to set up, but in short order; members will be asking you if they can write for the newsletter. ◆

# Reviews

## Print & Electronic

Reviews in *TPC* are indexed at  
[www.wu30.org](http://www.wu30.org) Journal page.



**The Fathers of Philately Inscribed on the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists** by Brian J. Birch. 320 pages, 8 ¾ by 11 ½ inches, hardbound, dust jacket, Royal Philatelic Society London, 2019. ISBN 978-0-900631-95-5, £60 plus shipping from the Royal Philatelic Society London, 15 Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 7BW, UK.

Author Brian Birch has contributed enormously in the field of bibliographies compiled by him in his pursuit of the history and literature of our hobby. In this volume he provides biographies of a group of 43 Philatelists who were designated the Fathers of Philately.

A committee of the London Stamp Club, c. 1919, decided to honor living philatelists who had served the hobby with distinction. Each person would be presented a diploma and be named to the Order of Philatelic Merit. After further deliberation it was decided to have these august individuals sign a roll which then became the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists.

During 1920-21 the requirements were finalized and the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain instituted the RDP. After an initial group was approved there would be elections of three new members annually. King George V was pleased to have his name appear at the head of the roll. The scroll was designed and in the side panels were the names of 43 “Fathers of Philately” who were deceased individuals that had served the hobby.

Many of the Fathers are easily seen to be significant contributors through name recognition. However, many other names are rather obscure. The original notes and records that were used to determine the list of the fathers are lost. Thanks to the considerable efforts of Brian Birch the profiles of all 43 Fathers of Philately comprise this book.

Those who are best known include the Earl of Crawford James Ludovic Lindsay, Edward Loines Pemberton, Jean-Baptiste Philippe Constant Moens, Thomas Keay Tapling, Philipp La Rénotière von Ferrary, and John Kerr Tiffany. Indeed, their profiles run 8 to 10 pages each. Lesser known individuals may have 2-3 pages of text.

The biographies include portraits or photographs. Each profile ends with an extremely detailed list of literature sources, in chronological order, which sometimes includes examination of birth, marriage, and death certificates as well as online references. Although there are 42 chapters reflecting the names that appear in the 42 panels, one entry combines the brothers Georges and Martial Caillebotte who established one of the major collections at the time.

The first appendix is a compilation of those Fathers of Philately who exhibited at major shows worldwide between 1881 and 1919. An index of the names of all persons mentioned in the text refers to the appropriate page numbers. A separate listing shows the birth and death dates, where known, for the same list of people.

The content, design, and binding are first rate and serve well to document significant philatelists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The technical aspects of the book are exemplary with the exception of two instances in the dust jacket of the use of “lead” instead of the proper “led.”

Alan Warren

**Norske Førstedagsbrev med vignetter** (Norwegian First Day Covers with cachets) by Ole Brænne, in two volumes: Part 1 1855-1989, Part 2 1990-2019. 1,390 pages, 8 ½ by 11 ¾ inches, perfect bound, card covers, self-published, Oslo, 2019. ISBN 978-82-691849-0-7, approximately \$100 plus shipping from some Norwegian stamp dealers, or from the author [widescreen@getmail.no](mailto:widescreen@getmail.no).

This very comprehensive catalog of the cachets of Norway's first day covers is a testament to the interest and popularity of this collecting area. The author includes not only illustrative cachets but also printed addresses of senders who are philatelic dealers.

Introductory material includes sources of first day covers for collectors like the major dealers and online auctions. Attention is called to forged postmarks and the literature sources where they are identified. A rarity scale from 1 to 10 is given for each cachet for each stamp issue, ranging from very common to extremely scarce. Each cachet entry also has a small checkbox so that collectors can record which items they own.

The first part begins by categorizing cachet types. There are thirteen varieties of the boxed 4-language cachets that have the text "First Day Cover" in French, English, German and Swedish. They vary in typeface and color. Next are separate lists by Norwegian stamp catalog numbers of designs by specific cachet organizations including the Norwegian FDC Service, the major Norwegian philatelic journal, Tubfrim Stamps (raises funds for tuberculosis and to help disabled children), and the stamp clubs of Bergen and Drammen among others.

Some of the producers are well known to Danish collectors as well such as Foghs, Magasin du Nord, and Populær Filateli. About thirty different firms are identified. Eight different designs of the Norwegian flag cachet are shown. The actual cachet listings begin with several local post stamps issued between 1997 and 2019. These are followed by the main listing of Norway's stamps chronologically by catalog number (*Norgeskatalogen*).

One of the first cachets was that of the Kristiania Filatelist Klub, known for issues of 1918 and 1921. Cachet designs really begin with the commemorative stamps of Henrik Ibsen and Niels Henrik Abel in 1928-1929. Many are actually picture post cards, occasionally used as maximum cards.

By the late 1930s the cachets are divided into handstamped ones and printed ones. Each cachet for any given stamp is assigned a cachet number, is illustrated, and in a list they are identified by producer or cachet maker where known. In a very few cases the number of cachets printed is included. A few cachets are known to exist and are assigned numbers but instead of an image there is just the wording NO IMAGE AVAILABLE.

The first volume ends with the stamps issued in 1989 and part 2 covers issues from 1990 through 2019. The introductory notes explaining the catalog listings do not appear in part 2. Some of the more popular stamps have more cachets than others. For example the 1995 set of three values marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Norway's liberation has 89 different cachets.

Just the cachet designs are shown to save space. Entire covers are illustrated if the cachet is large or has more than one image. First day maximum cards created by a firm for any issue are shown in their entirety. Very few sources for the information are listed. Two features missing from this catalog are found in the specialized Norwegian resource, *Norgeskatalogen*—the total number of first day covers serviced and a catalog value. The latter is for the most common variety whereas Brænne's catalog provides a scarcity indication for each cachet design.

This 2-volume cachet catalog is the most comprehensive for one country outside of the Mellone/Planty catalogs for United States issues. The limitations of the U.S. catalogs are that they only go up to the 1960s and are so old as to be woefully out of date.

Alan Warren



**Dr. Paul Singer & the History of Shanahan Auctions by Wolfgang Maassen.** 188 pages, 8 ½ by 12 inches, hardbound, Phil Creativ, Schwalmthal, Germany, 2019. ISBN 978-3-928277-78-5, €37.5 plus postage from PhilCreativ, Vogelsrather Weg 27, 41355 Schwalmthal, Germany or [www.philcreativ.de](http://www.philcreativ.de).

For a brief 5-year period in the 1950s, the Shanahan's Stamp Auctions firm in Ireland was the focus of a strange interlude in our hobby. The story is told here in detail by Wolfgang Maassen, current president of the AIJP, the international association of philatelic journalists. The author not only has an immense philatelic library of his own, but also for this story he recently acquired an unsold lot of material that included an almost complete run of the Shanahan auction catalogs as well as newspaper clippings and correspondence.

This material together with the resources of several major philatelic libraries and the opportunity to interview an employee of the auction house, Maassen was able to create this fascinating exposé of the colorful figure of Dr. Paul Singer and his business that drew the attention of collectors around the world.

Paul Singer was born in Bratislava. The apparently wealthy family moved to Vienna and Singer studied political science and sociology and obtained a degree in economics. His father established a family business and moved it to London in 1930. Paul joined the firm as secretary and then a director of this import-export business. After WW II his father turned the business over to Paul and his brother Eric. However it became unprofitable and collapsed in 1953. Paul moved with his wife and two sons to a small port town in Ireland near Dublin.

A local auction firm established by the Shanahan family specialized in sales of furniture and antiques. One day Paul Singer made an imposing entrance to the firm (he weighed about 300 pounds) and purchased an antique. He befriended the auction firm's owners and convinced them that it would be easier to deal in something physically much smaller than bulky furniture, namely postage stamps, declaring that he was an expert and bought and sold stamps internationally.

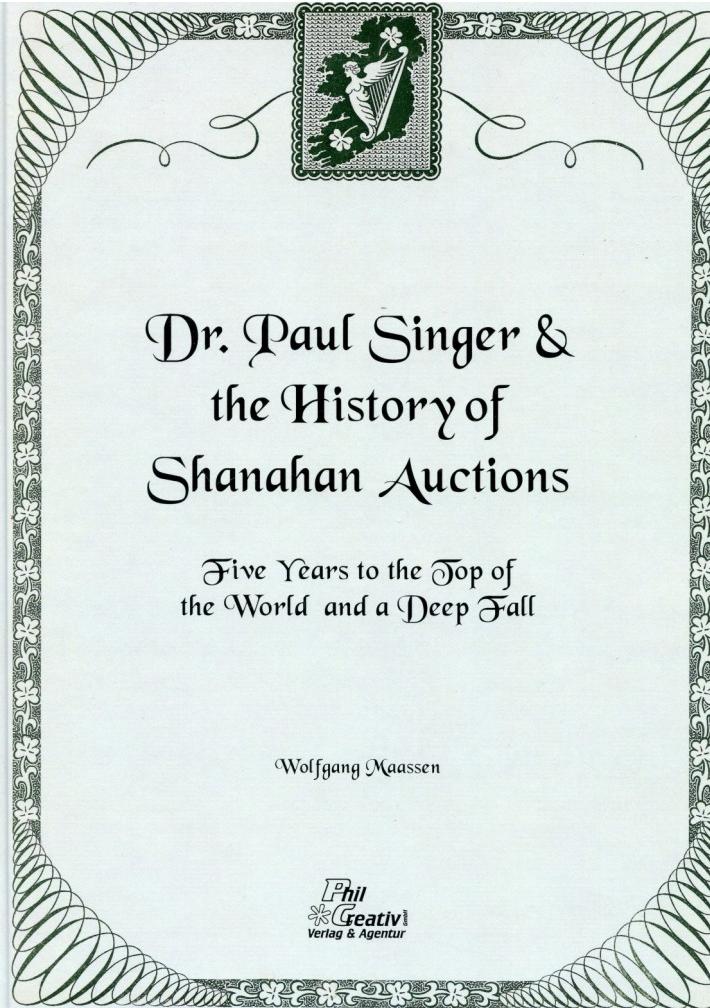
Singer was so convincing that the firm of Shanahan Stamp Auctions Ltd. was quickly formed in 1954 and began a series of stamp auctions. He purchased material from London stamp dealers and also took consignments from collectors. He undercut the sales commissions that other auction firms required. At first the catalogs were bound into a house organ for distribution—a journal titled *Green Isle Philately*. As his auctions caught the attention of collectors everywhere they were soon printed and mailed separately.

His business was so successful that he encouraged his customers, and others, to invest money in the firm for a rewarding return. He also offered investors a special deal where they could purchase from the auctions and pay 15% less than the amount invoiced, up to the value of their investment. Within a couple of years Shanahan auction catalogs were mailed to 60,000 potential customers worldwide.

His staff grew to nearly 100 employees. He sought the services of experts like Alberto Diena and guaranteed all lots to be authentic, with full refund if a recognized expert proved anything was counterfeit. As business prospered, Singer also developed a reputation for holding wonderful parties with caviar and champagne. He even held such banquets on his buying trips, inviting lawyers and bankers to be his guests.

As a new twist, Shanahan's offered "Stop Loss Insurance" wherein buyers were guaranteed that any lot purchased could be resold to the firm for a future auction for the amount paid. On November 15, 1958 the "Millionaire's" sale was held. Successful bidders (about 180 as it turned out) were invited to an extraordinary banquet with the usual champagne and caviar as well as a 10-course dinner.

The following year Singer made headlines when he returned home from a trip to Switzerland and announced he had concluded a deal to purchase the collection of Maurice Burrus for £3 million pounds. The deal actually stipulated that Singer pay \$6 million in six instalments. He paid the first instalment for a portion of the collection that he brought back to Ireland and stored in metal cabinets in the Shanahan office.



Before selling the Burrus material, a sizable collection of Lombardy-Venezia was to be auctioned by Shanahan's, valued at £500,000. The night before the auction the company offices were broken into and that collection was stolen; however, the Burrus material was untouched. Singer announced to the press that he was not concerned because the collection was insured, when in fact it was not insured.

Thus began Singer's downward spiral of a firm that had built a business from practically nothing to a sensational status for collectors in five years. Investors in the firm began withdrawing their deposits. Earlier in 1959 an audit firm found significant irregularities in accounting at Shanahan's, which Singer tried to explain away.

The theft was committed by a former employee and much of it was recovered before being sold by several auction houses in Europe. A liquidator was appointed, many employees were dismissed, and key officers of Shanahan's including the 45-year old Singer were arrested.

Author Maassen provides details of the trials held, Singer's imprisonment and posting bail, and the liquidating proceedings that took place over the next several years. He also traces what happened with the Burrus collections.

In the aftermath of the Shanahan collapse, Paul Singer and his wife disappeared. They ended up in Canada where a private detective agency found him. The agency was hired by four Dublin investors who made a settlement with Singer. Singer's mother lived in Toronto which explains

why he ended up there. He died in Toronto in 1985 at the age of 73.

Maassen's book contains much more information about the Shanahan business, the man who created the amazing business, and the aftermath of the firm's collapse. One chapter provides interesting details of his interview with a former employee of the Shanahan firm. A series of appendices offer more details of this strange story. There is a section of an auction catalog that describes Shanahan's business and why one should invest in it. The contract between the liquidator and the Robson Lowe firm for analysis of the remaining property and its disposal is reproduced.

The author also provides a detailed bibliography of the Shanahan auction catalogs. In a final appendix he analyzes the correspondence and envelopes from many of Shanahan's clients. There were examples from over 120 countries indicating how widely known the firm was in the world of philately. The historic illustrations record the key players in this story, some of the material that was sold, and even photos of Singer's famous banquets.

Wolfgang Maassen has brought together his intimate and in-depth knowledge of the history and literature of our hobby as well as his investigative powers to create a stimulating saga of the rise and fall of a major figure in the stamp auction field.

Alan Warren

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## Great American Stamp Show 2020



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**Don't forget the Writer's Unit 30 Breakfast  
Sunday August 23, 2020  
Submit your Publications for the Literature Exhibit**

# Sarasota National Stamp Expo & Writers Unit 30

## LITERATURE PALMARES

February 7-9, 2020

Note: This Literature Exhibit judges individual philatelic articles.

<b>Grand Award</b>	Dr. Charles DiComo	New Plate Flaw Discovery: "Dash & Ink Trail" on 3¢ 1851 Stamp Bristol Packet's "NEW YORK" Handstamp: Was it Applied in London or New York?	<i>Chronicle of U.S. Classic Postal Issues</i>	
<b>Reserve Grand Award</b>	Robert G. Rose	Bristol Packet's "NEW YORK" Handstamp: Was it Applied in London or New York?	<i>The London Philatelist</i>	
<b>Postal History Society Award</b>	Robert G. Rose	Bristol Packet's "NEW YORK" Handstamp: Was it Applied in London or New York?	<i>The London Philatelist</i>	
<b>APS Research Award</b>	Dr. Edwin J. Andrews	Analysis of Poland General Duty Revenue Tax Rates and Effects of Hyperinflation, 1921-1924	<i>The American Revenuer</i>	
<b>Collectors Club of Sarasota Award for Treatment</b>	Cheryl Ganz	Transcontinental Zeppelin Posts	<i>The Congress Book</i>	
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	Dr. James Mazepa	Baja California del Sur: 1915 Local Provisional and Coach Seal Issue	<i>Collectors Club Philatelist</i>	90
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## Materials for Review

Material for review may be sent to the editor. Reviews of materials are welcomed from members and non-members. Reviews should be concise and stress those aspects that are helpful examples (positive or negative) for other authors, editors and publishers. Review requests from those having an interest in the item, such as publishers and distributors, must include a copy of the publication.



## Secretary-Treasurer's Report

### Secretary Report 2019 Q3

#### About Writers Unit #30

The purpose of the Writers Unit #30 of the American Philatelic Society is to encourage and assist philatelic communications, knowledge, and comradeship. Membership is open to anyone interested in philatelic communications.

#### Membership Dues

Please note that start of year 2018 TPC is distributed by email. Those who have paid for 2018 and beyond by the old rates will be given a credit for the future. The membership dues for each calendar year are:

Web Delivery email full color..... \$15.00  
USPS delivery B/W photocopy..... \$20.00

Payment must be made in U.S. funds by a check imprinted with a U.S. bank transit number, or by postal money order payable to "APS Writers Unit #30." Some overseas members prefer to send U.S. bank notes. We will soon have PayPal available but not yet.

#### Updating Your Mailing Address

Please notify us of USPS and email address changes to assure that you receive without delay each issue of *The Philatelic Communicator*.

Alan Barasch, Secretary Treasurer  
P O Box 411571  
Saint Louis, MO 63141-3571  
WU30@MOPHIL.ORG

## Expert Help for Writers and Editors

Dr. Dane S. Claussen, Writers Unit #30 past president, offers free critiques of periodicals, books and manuscripts. Submit the four most recent issues, including postage equivalent to four times the first class mailing fee. Any unused amount will be returned. Critiques can be expected in about 30 days. Inquire before sending books and manuscripts, providing a brief description. Return time will vary depending on length and other commitments. Include an SASE. Send to Dr. Dane S. Claussen's Email: danes.

## Chapter and Website Feedback Service

Beginning in January 2019 critiques of club newsletters or websites will be available to any chapter at no cost. On request an experienced collector will review and provide written feedback on strengths and weaknesses to help your chapter better serve its members. The feedback service will replace the previous Chapter Newsletter and Website competitions. For more details contact Ken Martin, via email or phone.

## 2020-2022 Literature Exhibits

**APS Great American Stamp Show** August 20-23, 2020,  
Hartford, CT www.stamps.org.  
**CHICAGOPEX** November, 2020, Itasca, IL,  
www.chicagopex.com.  
**Sarasota Article Only Literature Exhibit**  
Feb. 2021. www.wu30.org.  
**CAPEX 2022**. Toronto Canada June 2022.